

### **Amendments to the Claims:**

*This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:*

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method to determine a need to hire a new employee to work within a manufacturing system, the method comprising:

receiving a first plant human resource requirement for a first plant of the manufacturing system and receiving a second plant human resource requirement for a second plant of the manufacturing system, the first and second plant human resource requirements predicting resources anticipated to be needed in advance of actually beginning related manufacturing process at the first and second plants;

calculating in a computer a first plant human resource difference for the first plant and a second plant human resource difference for the second plant based on the computer automatically comparing the first and second plant human resource requirements against respective first and second plant predefined human resource allocations;

determining the second plant human resource difference indicates a second plant human resource excess; and

determining a need to hire a new employee for the first plant if both (i) the first plant human resource difference indicates a first plant human resource deficiency such that the new employee is needed by the first plant to satisfy the first plant human resource requirement, and (ii) an insufficient number of the second plant human resource difference indicates that the second plant cannot allocate second plant human resources from the second plant excess are transferrable to the first plant to cover the first plant human resource deficiency.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein determining the need to hire the new employee further comprises comparing a first plant production schedule and the first plant human resource difference to determine that the first plant production schedule cannot be changed to cover the first plant human resource deficiency.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein determining the need to hire the new employee further comprises comparing a second plant production schedule and the second plant human resource difference to learn that the second plant production schedule cannot be changed to allocate second plant human resources to the first plant to cover the first plant human resource deficiency.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein determining the need to hire the new employee further comprising verifying the first plant human resource deficiency to insure only authentic needs to hire a new employee are determined.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein verifying the first plant human resource deficiency comprises receiving the first plant human resource requirement in a first plant labor resource planning report, wherein the first plant labor resource planning report includes a number of predefined fields to be filed in by the first plant for the purpose of providing a breakdown of the first plant human resource requirement according to the predefined fields.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5 wherein the first labor resource planning report is a computer-readable spreadsheet and wherein calculating in the computer the first human resource difference for the first plant comprises the computer automatically comparing the first plant predefined human resource allocation and the first labor resource planning report to output a first human resource difference forecast which indicates in each field of the first labor resource planning report the corresponding human resource differences.

7. (Original) The method of claim 5 wherein the received human resource requirements include a three month forecast of human resource requirements for the first plant, and wherein verifying the human resource deficiency of the first plant comprises determining the human resource deficiency of the first plant extends beyond 90 days.

8. (Original) The method of claim 5 further comprising determining a need to hire a temporary employee if the human resource deficiency of the first plant fails to extend beyond 90 days.

9. (Currently Amended) A computer system to determine a need to hire a new employee to work within a manufacturing system, the system comprising:

means for receiving a first plant human resource requirement for a first plant of the manufacturing system and receiving a second plant human resource requirement for a second plant of the manufacturing system;

means for calculating a first plant human resource difference for the first plant and a second plant human resource difference for the second plant based on the computer automatically comparing the first and second plant human resource requirements against respective first and second plant predefined human resource allocations;

in advance of determining an actual workload at the first plant, means for predicting a human resource deficiency at the first plant from the first plant human resource difference;

in advance of determining an actual workload at the second plant, means for predicting a human resource excess at the second plant from the second plant human resource difference;

means for determining at least one type of worker needed to cover the first plant human resource deficiency;

means for determined at least one type of worker causing the second plant human resource excess;

means for verifying the assessment of the at least one type of worker causing the second plant human resource excess; and

means for determining, in advance of actually determining the workload at the first plant, a need to hire a new employee for the first plant if to cover the first plant human resource deficiency if workers causing the second plant human resource excess are initially identified and subsequently verified to be of a different type than the type needed at the first plant both (i) the first plant human resource difference indicates a first plant human resource deficiency such that the new employee is needed by the first plant to satisfy the first plant human resource requirement, and (ii) the second plant human resource difference indicates that the second plant cannot allocate second plant human resources from the second plant to the first plant to cover the first plant human resource deficiency.

10. (Original) The system of claim 9 wherein determining the need to hire the new employee further comprises means for comparing a first plant production schedule and the first plant human resource difference to determine that the first plant production schedule cannot be changed to cover the first plant human resource deficiency.

11. (Original) The system of claim 10 wherein determining the need to hire the new employee further comprises means for comparing a second plant production schedule and the second plant human resource difference to learn that the second plant production schedule cannot be changed to allocate second plant human resources to the first plant to cover the first plant human resource deficiency.

12. (Original) The system of claim 9 wherein determining the need to hire the new employee further comprising means for verifying the first plant human resource deficiency to insure only authentic needs to hire a new employee are determined.

13. (Original) The system of claim 11 wherein verifying the first plant human resource deficiency comprises receiving the first plant human resource requirement in a first plant labor resource planning report, wherein the first plant labor resource planning report includes a number of predefined fields to be filed in by the first plant for the purpose of providing a breakdown of the first plant human resource requirement according to the predefined fields.

14. (Original) The system of claim 13 wherein the first labor resource planning report is a computer-readable spreadsheet and wherein calculating the first human resource difference for the first plant comprises a computer automatically comparing the first plant predefined human resource allocation and the first labor resource planning report to output a first human resource difference forecast which indicates in each field of the first labor resource planning report the corresponding human resource differences.

15. (Original) The system of claim 14 wherein the received human resource requirements include a three month forecast of human resource requirements for the first

plant, and wherein verifying the human resource deficiency of the first plant comprises determining the human resource deficiency of the first plant extends beyond 90 days.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15 further comprising determining a need to hire a temporary employee if the human resource deficiency of the first plant fails to extend beyond 90 days.

17. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method to determine a need to hire a new employee to work within a manufacturing system, the method comprising:

receiving a first plant human resource requirement for a first plant of the manufacturing system and receiving a second plant human resource requirement for a second plant of the manufacturing system;

calculating in a computer a first plant human resource difference for the first plant and a second plant human resource difference for the second plant based on the computer automatically comparing the first and second plant human resource requirements against respective first and second plant predefined human resource allocations; and

determining a need to hire a new employee for the first plant if (i) the first plant human resource difference indicates a first plant human resource deficiency such that the new employee is needed by the first plant to satisfy the first plant human resource requirement, (ii) the second plant human resource difference indicates that the second plant cannot allocate second plant human resources from the second plant to the first plant to cover the first plant human resource deficiency, and (iii) a first plant production schedule cannot be changed to cover the first plant human resource deficiency and a second plant production schedule cannot be change to free second plant human resources to cover the first plant human resource deficiency.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein determining the need to hire the new employee further comprising verifying the first plant human resource deficiency to insure only authentic needs to hire a new employee are determined.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein verifying the first plant

human resource deficiency comprises receiving the first plant human resource requirement in a first plant labor resource planning report, wherein the first plant labor resource planning report includes a number of predefined fields to be filed in by the first plant for the purpose of providing a breakdown of the first plant human resource requirement according to the predefined fields.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19 further comprising verifying extends beyond 90 days and determining a need to hire a temporary employee if the human resource deficiency of the first plant fails to extend beyond 90 days.